THE MAGIC LANTERN GAZETTE
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# 8TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES & CANADA JUNE 19-21, 1998

Larry Rakow, convention chairperson, has sent out his final letter before what promises to be a wonderful convention, chock full of astonishing and entertaining programs and rife with opportunities to add to your collection of friends (and . . . of course . . . magic lantern slides!). He states, "If the final gallery of presenters is one-half the equal of the current line-up, we'll all go home happy and satisfied."

He has checked with the Holiday Inn in Independence . . . (216) 524-8050 . . . and they still have a few rooms available. If you can rearrange your schedule to spend the weekend with us it's not too late. Contact Larry at: 1824 Wilton Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118 (216) 464-2262 (work). He'll register you and send you the details.

# SOCIETY LOSES VALUED MEMBERS

By Ralph Shape and Joe Koch

**Ronald J. Des Roshes:**

Ron Des Roches, member of the Magic Lantern Society of the United States and Canada, died October 23, 1997. He was 45. In honor of his many activities and achievements on behalf of the people and the state, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia passed a resolution commemorating the life of Ronald Des Roches.

Ron came to the society in 1996 when he traveled across country to take part in the San Diego convention. He brought with him a trailer loaded with his display of magic lantern slides from the 1920's devoted to the subject of anti-tobacco and anti-smoking, a program he was developing for the Virginia Department of Health. In his presentation he showed us how new technology could be joined with the era of the magic lantern, new ways to study slides, and how slides were used to educate people to the evils of tobacco. His display, much of which he made, was well received. Ron was enthusiastic about his subject and was eager to be a part of the society. He made many friends in San Diego.

Air Force veteran, teacher, politician, gubernatorial appointee to the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission, lobbyist for the Lung Association and the Cancer Society, businessman, family man, but most of all Ron was everyone's friend. The Magic Lantern Society has lost a valued member.

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## *SOCIETY LOSES VALUED MEMBERS continued*

Ron is survived by his wife Dani and their three children. Dani remains a member of the Society, and encourages suggestions from the membership on the best use of Ron's slide collection. Preferably, the anti-smoking campaign slide collection could be kept together and used to continue Ron's work. Any input from our wealth of experts would be appreciated.

### James P. Flanagan:

Jim Flanagan, long time member and former officer of the Magic Lantern Society of the U.S. and Canada, died in October 1997. Jim was an enthusiastic collector of magic lanterns. His frequent visits to London gave him the opportunities to both collect and take part in the hobby on both sides of the ocean. Through his frequent contribution of articles to the "Bulletin" he was able to share his hobby with other members. Jim served the Society as secretary/treasurer in 1987 and 1989. He was a presenter at our first convention in Rochester in 1981.

Joe Koch remembers Jim and his activities in the Society. Joe states "Jim was a great guy. He was an attorney and his wife, Ilene, a high school teacher."

At the Boston convention, Joe states, "Jim presented a program entitled 'Athanosius Kircher, The Woodcutter and the Upside-down Slide.'" Jim had an imaginary conversation between Kircher and the woodcutter because the illustration came out with the slide that was to be shown in the lantern right side up instead of upside down. It was hilarious.

In London, at one of their conventions, Jim bought the Bee Hive mechanical slide for 150 lbs. The lady that put it up for auction exclaimed "We're rich!"

Both Jim and Ron, as well as their contributions to the Society will be missed.

# REQUIRED READING ASSIGNMENT FOR CONVENTION ATTENDEES

Submitted by Ray Gilbert

The following article was sent to us from England. It was taken from an 1879 W.C. Hughes and Company catalogue. As educators, the Gilberts will not be able to attend the convention since it is mid-term for them. However, they felt they could make a contribution with these cautionary words of advice to those planning to purchase slides or equipment in Cleveland this month.

# Reflections on Lantern Slide Making in 1900

From the Hughes Illustrated Price List

We would kindly suggest to the young beginner never to be induced to purchase old apparatus unless well acquainted with every particular; because secondhand sets are generally deficient, requiring much altering and repairing to render them at all useful and fit for the purpose required; but more frequently to end in disappointment and expense, as, alas! there are many who pay in the long run more for secondhand sets than we can supply new for; by which means great regret and annoyance is experienced, and money uselessly expended, eventually ending by throwing away the apparatus with disgust, never to be used again. Our advice is to have that which is thoroughly efficient, and that which will give you satisfaction, and sure to come cheaper in the end. Look over our Catalogue of Prices, where apparatus of the finest quality are quoted at a little over secondhand price in appearance and workmanship, besides having such advantages as are offered in our great improvements. We are still anxious to **CAUTION!!!** our readers against secondhand instruments, more especially the novice who is generally the victim of the above circumstances. We are repeatedly having customers who complain of having been taken in, in this way, regretting they had lost their money, when, for a little more, they could have purchased a first-class instrument from us. How many too go to sale and purchase a lantern, and because they have got plenty of money, imagine they have got a bargain; but what a mistake, portability is the precise thing now-a-days. Then they call attention to the large lens. Surely, it must be good! Oh, yes; too good! Just good enough for the dustbin! Experience always makes perfect, and meanness, with a rash endeavor to save something, loses that which it works for, and which otherwise would have been a gain and the means of much amusement. Optics are dangerous things to buy in the darkness of non experience, and generally end in annoyance and great pecuniary loss. Again we say use **CAUTION!!!** against innumerable persons who indirectly trade in these things supposed by the unwary to be

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Secretary/Treasurer Ralph Shape

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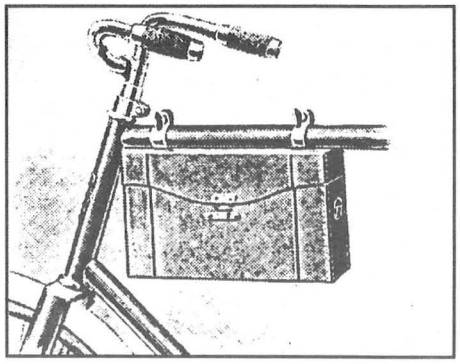
private people; or quite of a different business, when at the same time they are dealers, and make a living out of it by purchasing from other sources, and which are more often the "throw-outs" from the stock of some manufacturer. They also buy lanterns from wholesale houses and pretend to sell them second-hand; but quite equal to new—perhaps some old-fashioned instrument—write a name on it, and sell it for half its original cost, which years ago was a goodly sum, and the purchaser fancies therefore that he has made a bargain, when all the while they are worthless as compared with the improvement we have made in this direction. However, if our readers are persuaded that second-hand goods are the best, we would be very pleased to supply them much cheaper, according to what we should sell them, than they could buy from private persons; we also would give a warranty, as far as they go, as to their quality and efficiency, and will truthfully state their perfections and imperfections. As we are obliged very often to allow our customers something for their old apparatus, in exchange, when they are purchasing our cylindricals, we are in a position at all times to meet a demand that may come upon us this way, and so save persons much disappointment when seeking through the Exchange Papers for instruments of a scientific character.

In conclusion, we would call special attention to the great reduction in the prices of our Comic, Slipping, Photograph and other slides. We intend also introducing innumerable fresh subjects, so that our category shall not be the last in the market where novelty is sought after to introduce before the general public. We beg also to thank you for past favors, and to solicit a continuance of the same, which shall receive our best attention.

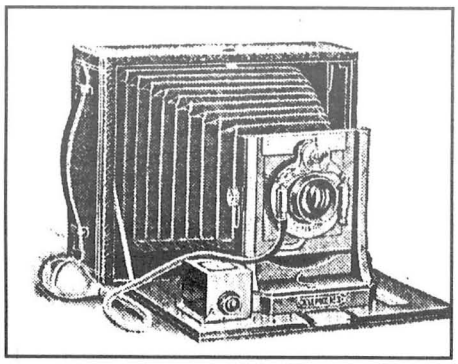
# REFLECTIONS ON LANTERN SLIDE MAKING IN 1900 AND A SEARCH FOR SOURCES TODAY

By Dick Wheeler

Pause a moment and reflect, as you look at some of your choice lantern slides, on how these slides were made years ago. Photography was very popular at the turn of the century and the late nineteenth century. Amateurs as well as professionals were busy making pictures, many of which became glass slides. I have a slide of an amateur and his dark room, which was a tent set up on his front lawn, and others of his friends at the seashore.



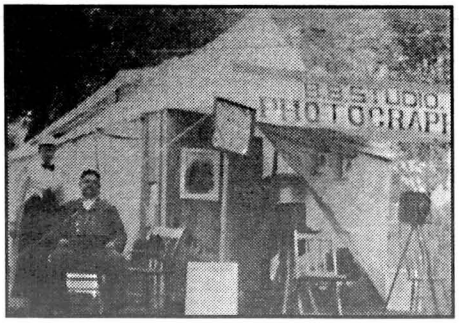
Bicycling was a very popular pastime in the late nineteenth century and early 1990s before the auto was available to the masses. The Cycle Poco camera by Rochester Optical and Camera Co. was popular. It was designed to be carried under the top bar of a bicycle and



so be readily available. I have a Cycle Poco #3 which is very pretty in varnished wood and polished brass. The plate holders will take either .050 glass plates or cut film.

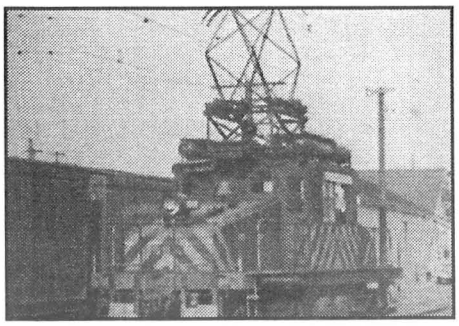
*continued page 4*

## REFLECTIONS ON LANTERN SLIDE MAKING continued




Commercial photographers who were everywhere made glass slides for every possible use. Slides were made in sets for travelogs, parlor entertainment, lectures, and education. Hospitals and institutions often had patients color glass slides as therapy.

This then is the way it was for many years until technology made a leap "forward" and 35mm gauge was developed for cheap easily produced film for negatives, pictures, and slides. Although there was film as well as glass plates, the glass plates were used extensively partly because more of the plates could be used to contact print the positive picture or slide. The emulsion was very slow, making long exposures necessary. Examples are seen in moving objects. Rapids in streams appear to be flowing as though painted with a brush. The technique of making pictures photographically is so well known there is no need to describe it here. The slide included here is one of a number I made when slide plates were still available. It is of an electric locomotive.



Not all slides are colored but the most attractive ones in your collection usually are. There was no color photography process at the turn of the century so hand tinting was the only way. A sense of artistry helped to achieve pleasing true to life colors. When producing quantities of similarly tinted glass slides a number of people each applied one color to a slide as it was passed to them. There were liquid as well as dry colors. Liquid colors came in sets of as many as 24 bottles. Each of the colors was made to match a natural color, as flesh, water, rocks, bark, etc. Dry colors came in books of 12 paper pages, each perforated into 28 rectangles or stamps, a different color on each page. A teaspoon of water was

enough to dissolve the color on a stamp to a tinting thinness. The photographic emulsion on the glass slide had a gelatin base which when softened absorbed the water color. I have several liquid sets of transparent water colors which due to age are dried out and one book of Eastman Kodak dry colors.

In England and Europe transparent oil colors were used. The start of my collection was in England and there are several 3 1/4" x 3 1/4" slide sets tinted with oil colors which are more vivid than water colors.

To complete a slide, a mat which framed the picture was placed next to the emulsion side of the picture followed by a cover glass. Using gummed tape around the edges of this sandwich, bound it all together into a finished slide. A star, dot, or similar mark was added in one corner of the slide to indicate to the projectionist where to hold the slide to project it properly.

While writing this article I became curious as to whether the components for glass lantern slides could still be purchased in 1997. I did quite a bit of research, asked a lot of questions, but found nothing available. Many I asked didn't know what lantern slides are. The most necessary item, sensitized plates are unavailable but Eastman Kodak through their professional section said that cover plates are available and they sent me their pamphlet #AJ-12 entitled "Making a Photographic Emulsion." Kodak can supply the necessary chemicals. It is rather an involved process which would result in black and white slides.

There are no water colors or oils labeled transparent in the catalog, but in some photography stores and art supply stores I found "Doctor Martin's" water colors. This company dates back to the turn of the century and I am sure the colors would work fine if diluted. Oils for coloring photographs are available too. If used lightly they should work. I could not find anyone who had worked coloring lantern slides.

Mats are not made in 3 1/4" x 3 1/4" size now. You could cut your own from opaque thin paper with an Xacto knife. Binding tape is not available either. A substitute is gummed packaging tape cut 1/2" wide by 15" long.

*(Ed. Note: See Magic Lantern Gazette, Spring 1997 issue for an additional source for modern binding tape.)*

In conclusion, glass lantern slide making and tinting using traditional means and material seems to be a lost art.

The following is a list of research material used.

### Catalogs:

Burke & James, 1916/1917

Peerless Japanese Transparent Water Colors, 1922

### Books on slide making and coloring:

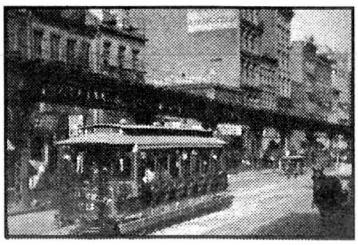
*How to Make Lantern Slides*, Frank R. Fraprie, 1918

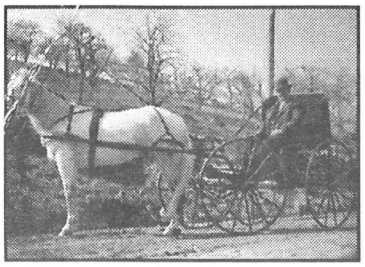
*The ACME Guide to Coloring Photographs of All Kinds with Transparent Water Colors*, 1910

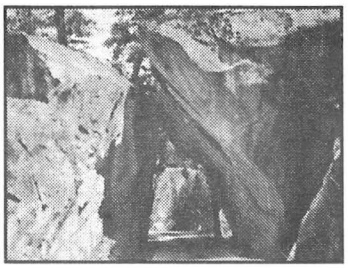
## Manufacturers, Institutions:

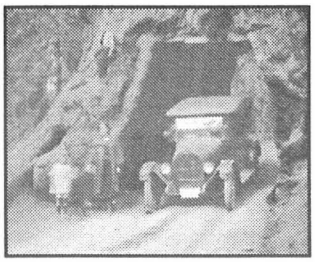
Eastman Kodak, Rochester, N.Y.
Eastman House, Rochester, N.Y. (Museum of Photography)
Rochester Optical and Camera Co. (Cycle Poco Catalog) 1900

The following are slides from the author's collection taken by amateur photographers of the time:







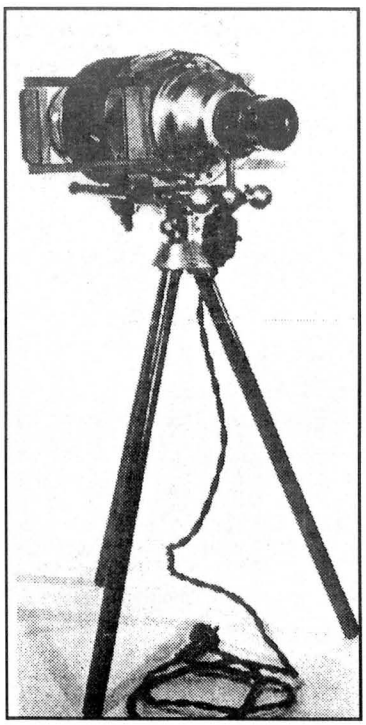


# VICTOR PORTABLE STEREOPTICON

By Robert G. Wilson

From *Photographic Canadiana*, Vol. 15 No. 3, Nov.-Dec. 1989

"Only a few years ago the Victor Portable Stereopticon introduced the new modern cylindrical design for appearance and compactness . . ." "At the time when the first Victor Portable Stereopticon appeared, all apparatus was clumsy, bulky, and complicated—uncertain of proper projection except in the hands of a trained operator." "It is conceded that the Victor Portable Stereopticon started the popular use of lantern slides." With these phrases, the Victor Animatograph Company began their 1920 catalog of Victor Portable Projectors which described a full range of equipment and supplies.



The Victor Portable Stereopticon, Model 2, (illustrated) was described as the "Aristocrat of Stereopticons." It was patented in May 1913 (May 10, according to the catalog, May 27, according to the label on the projector), with a second patent dated January 6, 1914. It had several special features. The cylindrical body allowed for perfect alignment of the lamp, condensers, and projecting lens in the factory, eliminating the need to do this while setting up for use. The body was made of cast aluminum for durability and light weight. The round lamp house gave perfect ventilation and the rotating slide holder allowed for leveling of the image on the screen.

Victor projectors could be supplied with a tripod for floor use, or a pedestal for use on a table. The tripod shown here is made of one inch steel tubing finished in baked black enamel. Each tripod leg is made up of two pieces which screw together.

Several light sources were available. A new improved Mazda-Nitrogen incandescent projection lamp could be supplied. A 108 watt, 6 volt lamp could be connected to any 6 or 8 volt automotive storage battery, or to the Victor "S.O.S." 6 volt battery which could power the lamp for three to four hours per charge. A 400 watt lamp was available for 32 to 60 volt power supplies from independent lighting plants, or 100 and 125 volt city power systems. A special controller also allowed for use with 220 or 250 volt power supplies. The 400 watt, 100 volt lamp was a round, three and a half inch diameter T-28 bulb, with an average life of 100 hours.

While Victor was just introducing the Mazda-Nitrogen lamp in 1920, they could still supply projectors equipped with their older lighting sources; an electric arc model capable of operating on 110 to 230 volts and an acetylene model with a single or double burner. Victor sold accessories for use with the burners Victor carbons for the arc lamps, and acetylene generators and storage tanks for the acetylene models. In addition, to project under a variety of conditions, a combination projector equipped with both acetylene burner and either a Mazda or an electric arc lamp, was available.

Victor supplied a choice of lenses, from 5 to 24 inches focal length. The five inch lens was suitable in small rooms with the projector up to 15 feet from the screen. The longest lens could be used when the distance between the screen and the projector was up to 110 feet.

*continued page 6*

## VICTOR PORTABLE STEREOPTICON continued

The 5 to 12 inch lenses consisted of a double combination of elements mounted in a spiral focusing tube. The longer lenses were single units mounted in a threaded flange which attached to the projector using a support rod.

Victor also sold a wide range of other items. Carrying cases for the projectors were enameled sheet steel or covered in leatherette, sheepskin, or a waterproof material called Keratol. Some cases were large enough to hold from 50 to 250 slides. Victor also sold projection screens, reading lamps, and electric lights to signal the projectionist, lantern slide supplies such as cover glasses, mats, binding strips, and water colours. The company sold and rented single lantern slides or illustrated lectures, with a total of 275 complete lectures available, each with a series of slides and a manuscript.

In 1920, the Victor Model 2 Portable Stereopticon with a 400 watt Mazda-Nitrogen lamp, condensing lenses, projection lens, eight foot wire connection, and a slide carrier cost $56. The basic carrying case with the Keratol cover cost an additional $10.

The Victor Animatograph Co. of 1920 had their office and factory in a sixty thousand square foot, three story building in Davenport, Iowa, where they employed 50 people. It had grown quickly over the previous few years from seven people working in a small two-story frame structure, when their "stock-in-trade again consisted of several large ideas, great quantities of enthusiasm, and ample financial backing." It now claimed over 25,000 users around the world, including numerous Canadian organizations such as the Canadian Military Hospitals, Ontario Agricultural Department, New Brunswick National Historical Society, the Salvation Army of Canada, and the University of Alberta. In Canada, the products were sold by Presbyterian Publications: The Board of Publications of the Presbyterian Church at Church and Gerrard Streets in Toronto.

If the would-be purchases believed the description by the Victor Animatograph Co., he would feel that he had no other choice.

*The projector and the catalog are from the collection of the author. The photograph of the projector is courtesy of Jack Addison.*

# LIFE ON THE ROAD WITH THE AMERICAN MAGIC LANTERN THEATER

By Terry Borton

**Lantern Shows With Live Actors**

I imagine it was the same in the old days; life on the road has it's moments.

Gorton, Connecticut. At our performances there are often people who have seen lantern shows in the old days. Usually their memories are rather vague, but occasionally we meet someone like Flora DeCorteau. She told us about an unusual format of magic lantern shows that she remembered when she was a child in New York City about 1923. These shows made a profound impression on her and got her excited about theater. She went on to become an amateur actor, and in her fifties, a professional belly dancer. She's still full of dramatic flair as she tells her story in an interview we taped at her home later:

"There were troupes that would come through the city back then and perform. Mom knew about it and would take me. The places were like the Y or the museum.

Sometimes there was just a plain slide show of stories, with no actors in it, but a man and a woman would come out and tell you what was going on. They weren't in costume, but the street clothes of the day, and looked more like school teachers than actors, and there was always a rinky-dinky sounding piano that went along with them.

But sometimes the plays were a combination of slides and actors. Most of the story was on the slides. Every once in a while the actors would come out in front of the slides and talk their parts or sing a song.

I remember *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*. Mom told me that's where I learned Scheherazade, because they had that music in it. There were three actors, Ali Baba, and the princess, and her father. Ali Baba had an Arabian costume on—a towel wrapped around him like his head was hurt. He would come out and run across the stage and meet the princess, and take her by the hand, and they'd throw a carpet on the floor and they'd sit on it, and then the lights would go down and the slides would show a carpet flying. But when they said their lines you could tell they were still sitting on stage.

Then they said, 'Here's the castle.' And then the slides would show the interior of the castle, or the robbers with their heads popping out of the barrels, and you could see the actors' shadows on the screen when they moved around in front of the lantern—pretty corny. When Ali Baba presented the father with the chest of many jewels, they were sitting on the floor, and the slide came in the background of, oh, the most magnificent rainbow of light types of things that were all over the place. Then they reached out and held hands. That was the end of it. They didn't kiss or hug or anything.

Another I saw like that was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The crowd scenes and the story were all in slides, but I remember the actress Eliza crossing the ice across the river because of the elaborate machine they had to make the waves go back and forth, and the icy mountain projected on the background.

In later years, in the 1930s, I saw *The Drunkard*. I remember thinking, 'Oh, I'll see the whole thing on stage.' But it wasn't just on stage. They did it the same way with slides that I've told you about. But you were allowed to make noises—hiss and boo, and make comments. It was more for fun. It was a 'melerdramer.' The story about the drunkard was nothing to laugh at, but the way they did it was lots to laugh at—they were hamming it up. It was prohibition then, so they were making fun of temperance.

They did *Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight* and *The San Francisco Fire* too, with lantern slides and actors and actresses that were government paid. (WPA?) They had groups that would go to schools and churches and present little plays, and some of them were pretty good. At that time there were some lantern slides but not too many because they said that rigging the slides was a little too much for them to handle in all those different places they went, and they had to worry about the shadows on the stage.

I hadn't seen lantern slides in years and years until I saw your show and I thought, 'Holy Cow, it's coming back.' "

# SILENT LAURIE'S LAST SHOW

By R.O. Bishop Sr. (TOP)

Some lanternists managed to stay with us for a long length of time. Men like Laurie "Old Bear" Lindsley, a northwest pioneer in his own right. He was the oldest living grandson of David and Louisa Boren. She was one of Seattle's "Sweet Brier Brides."

This writer arranged for and acted as his 'mule' for his last public magic lantern show given to the people assembled at Redmond, Washington's Marymoor Park. Stormy weather, thunder, lightening, the power was interrupted once or twice, but nothing stopped Lindsley. He carried on, informing the audience, "I knew I should have used kerosene. It never fails!"

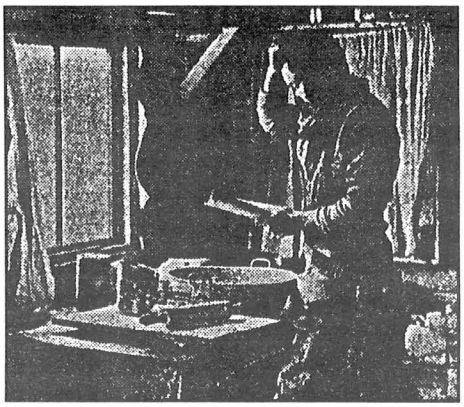
By the time the power came back on, his illustrated narrative had carried those assembled from the western Olympic ocean beaches where offshore haystack rocks were being pounded by wild surging waves, through the Hoh rainforests, and up and through the towering "Mountains of the Setting Sun" (the Olympics). Now came his prized image of the Storm King, a beautiful transparency he had photographed and developed himself. A great sun burst through lowering clouds, silhouetted the head and upper body of a great figure complete with crown, and in its outstretched hand sat a duck with beak wide open. It was an outstanding natural image. Often accused of manipulating images in the dark room, Old Bear Lindsley would have none of it. "It was a once in a lifetime shot and I was lucky enough to be ready and able to make the most of it!" he insisted.

Leaving the Storm King and Lake Crescent, we next traveled over Puget Sound, ("Whulge", for by this time he was beginning to substitute an occasional word or two from the Indian trade language, Chinook). Beautiful imagery of the Puget Sound lowlands along with slides of early Seattle were interspersed with views of Mt. Tahoma, whom local Indians sometimes referred to as "The Mountain that was God!" He explained that the city of Tacoma was named after the towering snow clad mountain, but that the "King George Man" had renamed the great edifice Mt. Rainier. "Now if I had my druthers," he explained. "It would still be called by the Indian name!"

He told of guiding the famous author, Mary Louise Rhinehart, her husband, and party through the high country. She was appalled to see Laurie sitting sidewise as he rode on Jingles, his horse. She chastised him as being careless. "Aw, Jingles is a lot more savvy about these trails than I am. Everything is alright!"

On this trip Rhinehart nicknamed him "Silent Laurie." Laurie claimed she did so because he talked too much. Between views of the country around Lake Chelan he told of eventually delivering the party to Marblemount where the personal railway coach of Jim Hill, wealthy businessman and donor of Mary Hill Museum, awaited them.

"Smell the wildflowers. Look at the Lupine. Listen to the music of the mountains," he told his lantern audience. "Hear the flutes in the high valleys and echo of the wind between the rocks."



All the time his self-made lantern slides were coloring the screen. As the program approached its eventual end, his colorful narrative left the English language and became nearly all Chinook. (Chinook was spoken as a secondary trade language by various Indian tribes from Oregon to Southeastern Alaska.) The beauty of the situation was that the audience was by this time so enmeshed into his presentation that they did not seem to notice the change of language and seemed truly to think they were understanding exactly what my old friend was saying.

A few more scenes, then a slide of Lindsley mixing up baking powder biscuits probably in his Lake Chelan cabin, a self portrait, he in his trail outfit—chaps and all, cowboy hat and a pistol on his hip. He explained that the pistol was to soften up the biscuits. Finally a lovely sunset which eventually dissolved into a single star. Lawrence Denny Lindsley's last magic lantern show was over. But in my mind's eye a prayer appeared upon the screen:

*continued page 8*

## The Lord's Prayer

Nesika Papa klaxta mitlite kopa Sahalee, kloshe kopa
Our Father who dwellest in the above, sacred in

nesika tumtum mika nem. Nesika hiyu tikeh* chahco
our hearts (be) Thy name. We greatly long for the coming

illahee kahwa kopa Shalee. Potlatch konaway sun
world, as also in the heavens. Give (us) day by day

nesika muckamuck; pee Mahlee konaway nesika
our bread, and remember not all our

mesahchee, kahwa nesika mamook kopa klask spose
wickedness, even as we do also with others if they

mamook mesachee kopa nesika. Wake lolo nesika
do evil unto ourselves. Do not bring us

kopa peshak pee marsh siah kopa nesika knoway
into danger but put far away from us all

mesahehee.
evil

Kloshe Kahkwa.
So may it be.

From Lowman & Hanford's publication of Frederick J. Long's Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon, copyright 1909.

# MY LIMELIGHT WAS A LEMON

By Henry Clark

## Part 7

My wedding album contains a photo of me doing a magic lantern show. My wife selected it from the 300 proofs the photographer sent us. She picked it as a substitute for the picture I really wanted to include, the one where she's valiantly trying to stand up after sitting on a garden bench but can't, because her bridal veil has been snagged by a thorn bush and is pulling her head back like the top of a Pez dispenser. I like that one a lot. She insisted the magic lantern shot was better.

We poured over our 300 proofs while pouring (and sipping) a substance that was well over 100 proof. I'm amazed we put together an album at all.

I did a magic lantern show at our wedding reception. I knew enough to tell my bride I was going to do this until the actual day of the wedding. Kathy wanted her day to be perfect, and she knows my lantern shows never are. Still, doing a show seemed appropriate to me since we had chosen to get married in the nineteenth century.

That's the advantage to working for a "living history" museum. The costumes are there. The bucolic landscape is there. The nineteenth century buildings, including a little church on the top of a hill, are there. The cows are there. (What would a wedding be without cows? How else could one fulfill the dictates of "something old, something new, something borrowed, something that moos?")

It's all a matter of convincing the museum curators to let you use these things.

The curators of Old Bethpage Village were in a mellow mood when I approached them in July of 1996. They agreed to let us use the Village church for our wedding and even agreed to loan Kathy a reproduction 1860s wedding dress from the museum's costume department. The wedding was to take place at six o'clock in the evening on September 28. We contracted with a local restaurant for a small reception dinner at eight. Since that would leave a gap of about an hour between the end of the ceremony and the time we were expected at the restaurant, I decided a magic lantern show describing our courtship would be the perfect filler. I bounced the idea off of Kathy's nine-year old daughter, Elyse, about a week before the wedding. Elyse thought about it for a moment, then said, "Make sure you use the picture of the guy swallowing the rat."

I sat her down next to me and said, "Elyse, this is going to be a joyous, unique occasion. A lot of people in your mother's family will be meeting me for the first time. We'll be handing out glasses of champagne at the start of the show. Of *course* I'm going to use the picture of the guy swallowing the rat."

I had proposed to Kathy three weeks after returning from the Magic Lantern Society's convention in San Diego. (I would have proposed to her before, but I have absolutely no faith in airplanes.) I proposed to her from the stage of Caroline's Comedy Club in Manhattan. On and off during the preceding two years I had been taking a workshop course in stand-up comedy, thinking the experience might improve my magic lantern shows and make my phrenology lectures better. (It didn't. The audience still stares stonily during the jokes.) This was my tenth time taking the workshop and even though I still hadn't gotten it right, they allowed me to be the Master of Ceremonies. The relevant moment came about midway into my five minute act.

ME: "When I was in college I dated this girl who claimed she possessed psychic powers because, at the age of seven, she drank all of the liquid out of a 'Magic Eight-Ball.' She said she could foretell the future if she was shaken, and turned upside down."

AUDIENCE: (Stony silence. A few coughs.)

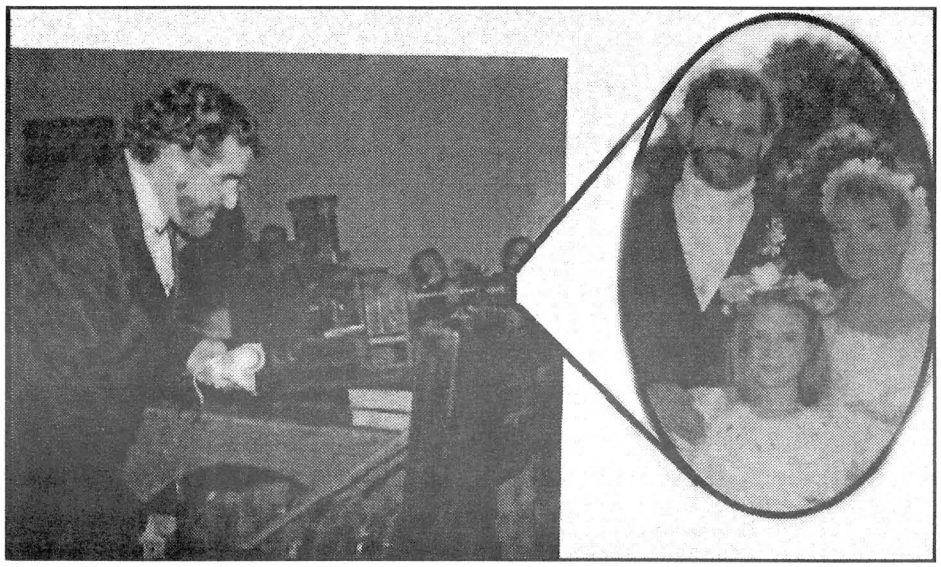
ME: "Hey, Kathy! Will you marry me?"

I went down on one knee on stage. Kathy nodded yes. I couldn't see her because of the bright stage lights, so there was a painfully prolonged pause. Then some lady sitting midway between the stage and Kathy's table, sounding like she was hollering across backyards in Brooklyn, rasped, "The lady says yes!" I whipped out a small jewelry box and asked a guy sitting up front, "Could you please pass this ring back to the blonde at the corner table?" The box passed through practically every hand in the audience before it got to Kathy, and to this day there is still debate over whether the ring that arrived was the ring I handed out. I keep telling Kathy the original was at least three karats bigger.

I didn't write a script for the magic lantern show I performed for our wedding guests. A few days before the show I went through my modest collection of slides and pulled those that seemed to have something to do with our courtship. I finally settled on thirty-two that were mainly concerned with coal mining and the war with Mexico. At the last minute, I eliminated two depicting whale flensing. I hoped, when the time came, to be able to improvise appropriate patter around my choices.

The wedding ceremony went through without a hitch. That sounds contradictory, but is merely accurate. Most of the people on the groom's side of the church, being my coworkers from the museum, were dressed in nineteenth-century costume. Most of the people on the bride's side of the church were dressed for the twentieth-century. It was as though a time-warp ran down the center of the building. We even had two photographers. One took twentieth-century color, while the other took sepia-toned black-and-white.

After the ceremony, we met our guests in the auditorium of the museum's reception center. We handed out champagne. Kathy tossed her bouquet. Six-year-old cousin Claire tossed her cookies. The lights dimmed, but only after Claire's mommy had cleaned up the mess. I got past the slides showing my life as a bachelor, when I had fought and died at the Alamo, and scenes of Kathy's life as a nurse during the Civil War, and then I had my greatest success in a series of slides showing how we first met. (We had both signed up for a whaling voyage, thinking it was a singles cruise.) Then came a group of slides introducing members of my family, including my Uncle Nicodemus, "who stays in bed most of the day, and inhales so deeply when he snores, he sometimes swallows rats!" This was immediately followed by Clarie's second discombobulation of the day, which effectively ended the show.



Still, I thought the show went well enough that I wrote a script for it and performed it as my annual Christmas show for Old Bethpage's visitors that December. The following Christmas, in 1997, after finishing a performance of that year's (totally different) show, a woman in the audience came up to me and said she had come hoping I was going to repeat the wedding show. She had seen it the previous year and enjoyed it. I was flattered, but had to explain to her that I never do the same show twice, owing to my propensity for dropping and breaking slides. She saw the logic in this.

Enough slides of the wedding show survive, however, that I have decided to perform it one final time at the Magic Lantern Society convention in Cleveland. I'm bringing my new family. But not cousin Claire.

## Next Issue: The Final Installment

# A "BORING" STORY

By Joe Koch

The most boring slides we ever showed were "The Pilgrim Story," by varied artists, including some Beales. The set consisted of fifty slides starting with the Pilgrims'/Puritans' expulsion from England by James I who promised to hurry the pilgrims from the land. The year was 1620.

Judge John Goodloe, the president of the Mayflower Society in Seattle, called and asked Alice and I if we would put on "The Pilgrim Story" for their society's annual meeting at the Officers' Club, Sand Point Naval Station, Seattle, Washington. Seventy people attended the affair. It was July 29, 1984.

The big day came and we had a lovely dinner followed by a business meeting: introductions, announcements, etc. Some of the members were so old we figured they couldn't be too far removed from the original Pilgrims.

I asked an attorney attached to state government in Olympia to do the reading for the slides while I operated the equipment. As

*continued page 10*

## A "BORING" STORY continued

the story droned on, and on, the president, Judge Goodloe, fell asleep. When I noticed this, I looked around and fully half the audience was asleep, from age or material I do not know but I suspect it was the material. I even saw the reader's chin drop to his starched shirt front, but he recovered and droned on. The last slide depicted the Pilgrims giving thanks, (in company with their Indian friends,) that the program was finally over!

Postscript: Judge Goodloe later became a Washington State Supreme Court Justice. He is now deceased.

At the Magic Lantern convention in Seattle in 1989, we put the set up for auction. They were presented by the auctioneer as being dull, boring, and monotonous. Mercifully, someone purchased the set (I know not who) along with the much too long reading. Perhaps the new owner was able to inject some life into the story.

By the way, not all Bostonians are dull, boring, and monotonous. I married one who is definitely not!

# JAMES GIBSON, PSYCHOLOGIST, AND ERNIE GEHR, FILMMAKER

MEMBERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

By Robert Becklen

What makes Gehr's films interesting in the present context is their perceptual nature. His films are about visual experience, as a phenomenon in and of itself, to be appreciated and explored for its own sake. They are studies of how the perceptual process is directed, or "massaged" as he puts it, by appropriate visual stimulation. When Gehr says, "I don't manipulate people's emotions; I merely shape materials," he is referring to the fact that, ultimately, the subject matter of his films is the visual sense itself. In the course of some twenty cinematic artworks, Gehr's discoveries of how to shape materials to engender what he calls "the pleasures of vision" bear an uncanny resemblance to Gibson's ideas of basic visual sensitivities to "transformational invariants" in optical change.

These discoveries are the result of a form of intuitive visual experimentation that may have originated in similar passions and temperament, but was otherwise completely independent of Gibson's work. Gehr tells of his excitement when, as a young filmmaker, he used to walk around the streets of New York "reading light" with a light meter and finding that each direction, each time of day, each movement, had a unique individual identity, a kind of "personality" (cf. Gibson's emphasis on the uniqueness of the dynamic optic array). Rather than "correcting" for overexposures or "compensating" for underexposures, as common photographic practice would dictate (cf. the perceptual problem of "constancy"). Gehr found in this very distinctiveness of light and change a cause for cinematic exploration and artistic celebration, the inspiration for how to shape materials into cinematic works of art.

From among several of Gehr's works that would serve well to elaborate on the Gibsonian parallelism I have chosen for discussion and analysis a short film from 1977, titled UNTITLED (see plate 11.15). First, a brief description of the film:

UNTITLED begins with a flat, out-of-focus, reddish-pink screen on which blurry white patterns quickly appear and disappear. After a while a space seems to emerge behind the screen. The swiftly changing patterns generate an experience of slow floating motion, through a field of snowflakes that whirl about in the wind. There is simultaneous serenity and agitation in the portrayed motions. The background appears soft, almost quivering at first, as if alive, and the reddish color suggests warmth in contrast with the snow. As the film progresses the snowflakes get smaller and better focused, yielding a kind of distance perspective, and the background acquires more and more substantiality. At some point, and often quite suddenly, the trancelike floating experience is broken by the discovery of what lies ahead: *a red brick wall!* The entire meaning of the earlier experience undergoes a sudden shift as this prototype of the impenetrable obstacle becomes apparent. Softness shifts to hardness, warmth to cold, animateness to inanimateness, temporality to permanence. The evanescence of the snowflakes, which live but for a few seconds before turning into water drops, is heightened by the sense of timelessness conveyed by the wall. Then, with gleeful mischief, Gehr reminds us that the wall is no more permanent than the flakes because it is not, after all, real. A flair at the end looks like a giant snowflake engulfing the entire film, gobbling up the whole event, celluloid and all! All that is left is a screen, on a wall . . .

UNTITLED is an informational exploration of contrasts and contradictions within an ecologically structured frame. As such it can be seen as an artistic experiment on essentially Gibsonian intuitions, much in the manner that Duchamp's nude was an artistic experiment on Marey's and Muybridge's works of a century ago. Gehr skillfully used the power of optical transformations, the juxtaposition of contrasting affordances in Gibson's terminology, to convey simultaneously opposite perceptual qualities in a gradually unfolding visual dialectic. The essential intuition that animates the film is the idea that Gibson expressed of perception as an exploratory process that occurs intrinsically over time. "To give it a name," says Gehr, "is like looking it up before it is done . . . I want to let the viewer feel it out for himself." The haptic metaphor is of course reminiscent of Gibson's thinking as well. Gehr speaks of his interest in "essential cinema, almost tactile cinema," and refers to one of his films (*Serene Velocity,* 1970) as a "visual massage." To Gehr, as to Gibson, vision is "palpable" and extended in time, and this is precisely what makes film such an ideal medium with which to explore the basic nature of sight. Yet, the fact that the cinematic illusion is possible at all remains utterly and wonderfully paradoxical.

UNTITLED is a visual pun and a serious commentary at the same time on contrasting ecological properties, including the paradox of the medium itself; even the neutral-sounding title plays on this theme by asserting its own negation! The film is meant to challenge viewers, to involve them not only in a series of portrayed events but in the process of seeing itself. In seeking these ends Gehr relies on visual intuitions, more than an articulated theory, intuitions that are inspirationally parallel to those that guided Gibson's lifelong quest and led to a whole new way of looking at perception. Gibson was a scientist first and foremost, Gehr is an artist. But each in his own way has carried on the timeless human search to understand how we come to know and experience the world and ourselves in it. This search, surely, is a process of exploration over time.

*Ed. Note: Ernie Gehr is a long time society member who lives in San Franciso, California and teaches film at the university level.*

# THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW

By Bob Hall

It's Easter morning as I write this. Sue and I are spending the weekend with three of our grandchildren in Portland, Oregon while their mom and dad are taking a well-earned getaway.

We dyed Easter eggs yesterday and last night we put carrots and a plate of flour by the front door. During the night the Easter rabbit came, ate the carrots, stepped in the flour, and left tracks to the hiding places of the Easter baskets.

This is a tradition that started with our children and has passed on to our grandchildren. Other holiday traditions that have passed on from the second generation to the third are fireworks and "s'mores" on the 4th of July, and carving jack-o-lanterns and trick-or-treating at Halloween.

However, along with all the usual traditional activities at Thanksgiving and Christmas, a new one has been added since Sue and I started collecting magic lanterns and slides, **"The Family Magic Lantern Show!"**

The show has evolved from a few Pilgrim slides on Thanksgiving and the Christmas Story and Santa slides on Christmas, to other story sets and mechanical slides. There have to be some traditional slides: chromotopes, the growing-nose slip slide, and the Rat Catcher, for example. But there has to be something new each time, also.

Another thing has changed. As the grandchildren have gotten older, the number of "assistants" has increased. The oldest, Joshua, now eight, has graduated to doing the Rat Catcher and running the slide changer. The younger ones to the slip slides and chromotropes. This Christmas, we will have two more ready so it will entail making sure there are enough things to do and making specific assignments.

Not only has the lantern added to our holiday traditions and enjoyment, but it has also added to our children's and grandchildren's knowledge. They now know what magic lanterns are, they know what they look like, how they work, and how to use them.

This is one of the aims of the Society: to make others aware of the magic lantern, it's role in history, and to keep it alive. Many of you do this through public shows, lectures, classes, demonstrations, and displays. We do it with our family. In fact, an Easter show would be a good idea! I'd better get busy. I may talk to you later . . .

# 1998 NEW ENGLAND MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY MEETING

By Terry Borton

Twenty people attended the fourth annual meeting of the New England Magic Lantern Society, which was held in a new venue this year—the site of Dick Balzer's spectacular collection of lanterns, slides, and related materials, and now the regional outlet for Dick's equally spectacular new Abrams' book, *Peepshows: A Visual History*.

A round robin introduction featured Paul Barresi's new prize, a bizarre homemade lantern combining a real lantern wood frame and bellows with a camera lens and using a milk can for a body. The Wypy family demonstrated current restorations on their lantern (purchased at last year's meeting) a newly re-silvered mirror. (Larry is a one-step-at-a-time perfectionist. By 2025 the lantern will be spectacular!) Alan Kattelle brought an unusual arc lantern, and tried his best to sell us on kits to convert movie projectors (or lanterns) into lamps (little success).

Then it was time to view the Balzer extravaganza. For most in the group it was the first exposure to a "modest collection," and they were awed by the range and diversity of lanterns displayed. High points were Dick's collection of very early Phantasmagoric slides (a moving winged bat, for instance); and beautifully painted, large, Polytechnic-like-slides to say nothing of Dick's wit throughout. (Marie Wypy, age 10, got beneath Dick's dour demeanor, and charmed him into giving away a half-dozen children's slides. Be forewarned. The child's a comer.)

After a delicious lunch supplied by all, Kent Wells (son of Leora Wells, editor of the ML *Gazette* in its early days) showed 35mm slides of their family collection, including a wonderful shot of the family scrounging at a tag sale in the 50s, properly dressed for the occasion with the men in jackets and ties, and Leora in white gloves! Barbara Gaudio showed some recently acquired advertising slides, Dick Moore presented a wonderful set of photo slides of the Barnum & Bailey Circus, and Dorothy Bromage gave us a tour around the world accompanied by music from a half-dozen different music boxes—including ones in the shape of a teapot and a lamp.

Terry and Debbie Borton finished off with a short segment from The American Magic Lantern Theater's "Valentine Show," featuring a very touchingly rendered version of Beale's "Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" by AMLT pianist and soloist, Jacqueline Alvarez.

# THE NORTHWEST CORNER

By Judie Shape

The Northwesterners of the Magic Lantern Society of the U.S. and Canada gathered on March 15 for their first meeting of 1998. The site was at the home of the Society's founders, Joe and Alice Koch, in Auburn. Besides the Kochs, attendees included the Halls, Sharon Koch, the Potters, Larry Cederblom, and the Shapes.

Correspondence was shared from Bob Bishop, Harvey Becker, and Bill Worth. Joe shared his horror story about answering an enticing ad in a trade paper and sending a check for sight unseen lantern and slides. Junk lantern came but no slides. Luckly he got some of his money back. Sue and Bob reported on their shopping. Found a Megalethoscope at a Tacoma antique show but they were outbid by a museum ($2,000). Joe and Alice gave a lantern show for the Enumclaw-Buckley Historical Society in January. They had great attendance and got good response from the audience. Larry announced the Society will again have a booth at the camera show in April at the Puyallup Fairgrounds. NW members will display. In past years this show has served as a good advertisement for the Society. Convention plans were discussed and all look forward to a great time in Cleveland.

Adjournment for lunch and as usual we had too much food. Must be something about magic lanterns that causes overindulgence. Maybe it's Alice's lasagna.

Back to business. Show and tell time. Then, being near to St. Patrick's day, Joe entertained with every Irish slide he could find. Bob read a script with near perfect Irish accent.

The next meeting is planned for May 3 in Tacoma at the Washington State Historical Museum. We've been invited to visit their show on the Alaska Gold Rush in exchange for a future lantern show.

On May 3, the Northwest Corner met for lunch at The Old Spaghetti Factory in Tacoma. Present were Kochs (Joe, Alice, and daughter-in-law, Sharon), Potters, Halls and Shapes. Following lunch we toured the newly opened Washington State History Museum. The main purpose for the visit was to view the temporary exhibits on the Alaska Gold Rush and the Red Cross, both of them having 100-year anniversaries this year. Since many of us have slides pertaining to both subjects, the many views on display were of particular interest. Admission was free in exchange for members doing a lantern show for the museum at a future date.

Sharon Koch, who "volunteered" to plan for the hospitality room at the convention, reported on her findings and plans were made for providing snacks and beverages and "manning" the room by the Northwest Corner. Ya'll come see us, ya hear.

# BITS AND PIECES

- After reluctantly parting with ten of our *most* boring slides to contest winners from the last newsletter, we received a note from Tom Rall informing us that they would make great cover plates for repairs. We'd never imagined he'd think of anything so exciting to do with them!

- A call from Nancy Berg on the previous issue was to inform us that the slides she and Margaret received had not been misrepresented. They were truly **boring**!

- In a letter accompanying the Hughes catalogue article, Ray Gilbert states that he and his wife, Pat, set off on a 400 mile round trip at the end of February to see a lantern show. It was put on by Mervyn Heard and Ellis Pike in the seaside town of Budleigh Salterton in Devon, where Exeter University is located. They needed little encouragement as Budleigh and the surrounding area is one of their long time holiday haunts.

Exeter University is, of course, the home of the Bill Douglas Centre so they gave Richard Crangle a call and arranged to visit. They were well rewarded for their four hours motoring.

What a place! Ray states, "Less than two percent of the collection is on view and plans are to change the cabinets regularly."

The best part for Ray was the research centre and to see, not one copy, but several copies of all those rare books you've always wanted to browse through and from which to make notes.

Mervyn's show was excellent entertainment. Ray and Pat could well believe that not much was really planned, but Mervyn and Ellis alternated with their patter. The audience appreciated the devilment in Mervyn's antics as he dissolved a skull into the chorus of one of Ellis' "serious" songs.

There was a good cheese and wine supper and the Gilberts were not sorry to tumble into a comfortable bed at nearly midnight.

- Jack Judson has bought a website and wishes to give it to the Society. He will present this during the business meeting at the convention and the membership will be able to ask questions and discuss the feasibility of internet involvement.

# CLASSIFIEDS

**Wanted:** Movie coming attraction slides of Mary Miles Minter. I will pay $50.00 for any slide I do not already have. List of her film titles on request. Ron Krueger, Box 741, Oak Park, IL 60303 (708) 788-8235.

**For Sale:** E.P. children's lantern in box. McIntosh "tubular" Biuneal. Call John Gormley, (309) 797-3580 for information.

**For Sale:** Regret that I must sell my collection. Approximately 10,000 magic lantern slides. Includes two wood storage cabinets with drawers from an old drug store which holds about 100 slides per drawer. Also, two projectors (electric). Asking $9,500 for all. Phil Singleton, P.O. Box 810, Winchester, Oregon 97495 (541) 673-6124.